

murmurations

voices on unsanctioned flight paths in the
half-light of a new epoch



Lesley Battler

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and

heat and drought brown
my room, thorns sprout from the walls,
it snows so hard the kitchen door is barred shut and
i disturb the burrs, shovel a path to get my groceries
and it rains, it rains without end until the room
blooms purple and yellow and
everything smells
black

shimmer

a sultry day
running through tantrumy dunes
to creamy beach flecked with whelks. odd corners
of boom and shush where sea meets land,
a windful of egrets, the shimmer
along the marram,
this is new
yesterday sinks
into the grey insistent *be not afraid*
the isle is full of noises, sounds and sweet airs, night
coming in on the tide almost too low
to hear

Princess Forget-Me-Not and Jericho the Cat

old wood, casement windows, smell of rain, blue velvet
curtain. *cracks in the plaster, the Nile River, feeling its way down to the Great Sea, a land
existing in memory, beyond memory.* tonight we sail a ship down the river to a kingdom
on the other side of the world, where we find Princess Forget-Me-Not and me,
Jericho the Cat. you shudder. *is it the rain? the silvery light? the dancing trees?
the blue foil castle gleaming from a background of billowy
white clouds? (a castle!)*

Jericho the Cat turns to the audience and speaks, the Princess
has to kiss me, the spell won't work if i kiss her. he looks straight at you
and shrugs, if she doesn't kiss me today, i shall have to leave, sail to yet another place
where i must be alone. the Princess doesn't love me, we are only friends.
you look out the window *oh listen, past the words, past the story,
the sound of rain, slow steps coming toward you in a dream,
approaching then dissolving,
dissolving*

before i leave i will tell the Princess i love her. maybe she will kiss me.
you can't look. *cover your eyes, sail down the curtain, drift away until all you hear is rain cat-
dancing on the roof, filling woods, drowning ponds, carrying away fences, the curl of the river slapping
the hull of the ship with all of Jericho's belongings stacked to the sky, tied up with a frayed rope.
no one to love, no one to love him.* they walk and talk. (Kiss him! he's really
the Prince!) the Princess bends, kisses Jericho. the cat
mask drops off. still you can't look,
you are dying, dying

under

Jesus dives into the river
down, deep,
then appearing
long and white and arced
like a porpoise
i know it's him,
it's not the moon,
there is no moon
tonight
he is calling me
from the long slow
lullabye
river
i tiptoe out
the screen door
barefoot
into shadows
i look back, no one
is following, he is waiting
for me
his face
swirling in the water
he opens his arms, i go
to him, he picks me up,
holds me,
rests my head
on his left shoulder
my eyes at once
closed wide
open

we turn in the water
and turn
again
he sinks, his body
shimmers into bright rings
cooling
into bands of shadow
on the water
i step out of the river
shivering
through the leaves, the moon
behind me, the house
faraway
outside, so deep
outside no one can find me
i go back
through the rocks
to the same dark, moving
place
he is still there
i walk into the water
close my eyes
he takes me
into his arms
again
he hasn't left me, will never
leave me, he is warm
he takes me
under

tide land

days come and go
a boom, a hush a sigh
how have i made it
this far
just a shade of my past self
hey, past self, why not toss
your shade on me
what else am i good for
if they ever let my face out
of this cage
a soft shoe exit, tiny road
at my toes
how do i find
an away from home, not
a star in the sky
i do know
it's best to stay
as far away from gods
as i can

In the night

In the night
Come and ride your horse
He is luminous
Lunar blue
Mother, father
Open the gate
In the night
In the night
Come and ride your horse

And it might *hmm hmm* rain honey
And it might *hmm hmm* rain fire
And it might *hmm hmm* be song
As old *hmm hmm* as earth

In the night
A King will steal your soul
Clouds will gather
A dark mass
Over your house
Open water
In the night
In the night
A King will steal your soul

And the sky *hmm hmm* might thunder
And the hooves *hmm hmm* might pound
And the earth *hmm hmm* will crack
As you *hmm hmm* ride down

In the night
Someone could make you
Open the gate
To the City of Camps
Lift the rocks
Look at the bones
In the night
In the night
Someone could make you

the tow

i slip in and out
of oceanthought

half-listening, distant
skitter, crystal
lizards

an alphabet is chained
to my briny mind
little criminals splitting
acrostics
delicate lattice
of lacrosse sticks

letter by letter
sentenced words slow-mo
sea to brawling sky
howling vowels
forced to their feet

stone-buttoned
consonants step over
the fallen

shaman is solemn today,
awakens imago from the tow
chalks the air
with paristexas

syntaxis refuse my fairtrade
linguage keeps foaling
on my hoard

green clouds
more words
anchored by hawsers, keels rusting
in iodine, knife blade
or buck shot?

sent to the noose's room
i can't enuncio, make sovereign
when i know
nothing what i speak

deep in words where birds
dare not

menace

SUDDENLY. sorry, Patty, honey, Mother wants to watch the MCCARTHY HEARINGS in peace. YOUNG LADY, you can just go to your room until you're ready to act like a CIVILIZED human being. in her room, Patty hears voices whispering from the closet. she places her left ear at the keyhole and hears something shocking, FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY HOUR IS AT HAND. she runs to the living room window and sees all the adults on her street turn into ZOMBIES. her eyes widen as they march into her house and tramp up the stairs. Patty thinks fast, reaches SENATOR JOE MCCARTHY on the telephone. half an hour later ARMY COMMANDOS led by Senator McCarthy burst into the house. soon the zombies are CAPTURED and herded into three large paddy wagons parked outside the house. Senator McCarthy turns to Patty and says, it's PATRIOTIC CITIZENS like you that are helping us contain THE COMMUNIST MENACE. then, true to his word, Senator McCarthy restores the living room to PERFECT ORDER

grace

DINNER IS READY. you're killing yourself with all that sugar. FIRE! crimson scream, liquid death. GUN, he's got a gun. BANG BANG, i just shot you. Hell with it, sugar's cheap, back in '49 i crushed 'em by the dozens. TROMP TROMP. hey mom, do ants have hospitals? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? i saw one ant pick up a dead body and drag it into this crack in the sidewalk. DON'T TALK LIKE THIS IN FRONT OF GRANDPA. Grandpa Joe, do ants have hospitals? ants WORK HARD unlike THIS GENERATION of young people with ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD to sit and watch them. finally, FATHER KNOWS BEST. bless this table and all we're about to eat

spring plainsong

it is eventide
in Aviation Wood
starless and wild

holy global economy
slowly rolling over jolly
roger sea

9000 feet invisible
starfall unusual typical
fortywinking hallelujah
design fault

come closer, the killsats
are blossoming non-stop
Hong Kong Seoul ghostly
either side

listen. this twinseat F-15
comes down, can't find
a buyer in the night see-
sawed like a suspended
sentence

four little shuttles
in a wood can't get a
visa from the scaled-down
salt-brown Roscosmos

they've got the Krikalov nose,
cosmonaut chintz, o, what'll
the neighbours think

moulted feathers of the
People's Liberation Army
dream home deep Beijing
REM pre-scream quiet

as dawn stomps out
of Handcuff House
SpaceShipTwo boils
Von Karman onions
in their overcoats

your daily hullabaloo
all cool and scrubbed
some thalidomide in
your bubble-and-squeak
my dear?

Barefoot hovels sigh
the streets close. one size
does not always fit rumbly
clog-dancing farms

praise us, all Vesuvius
cruise control in our kitschens
stirring jeroboams of murdering
herbs, black bells, weeping
clocks

phials of wildfruit, rosy
smoke of fire-and-forget,
jot of hot fog cyanide

nine hits high-clutter bat
spit, simmer Hellfires
until lullabribed

off-key

algebra

i slip my key in the lock
nothing opens. Miss Lois can't call me
through her magic mirror
access denied

to reset my password
i must supply my userID. without a user
name i can't request a new
password

the house crouches, stunned
under the weight of algebraic equation.
i disagree with algebra
on principle

the way it chains conclusions
to premises, but what of a present unable
to keep the same time in any
two moments

numbers, human mummery
should i conscript them, ghost them
summon the stunt doubles?
worst was volatile

Mr X, alias Herbert Morris,
who saw the Hindenburg crash, New Jersey
1937. every time X appeared
in my Hilroy

he cried *oh no please, please*
believe me, i would have saved them if i could
i had to let him go, deal with the inevitable F
in algebra on my own

futurism

Miss Lois's mirror is covered
in oceans and time zones. a great river
crosses my palm, continents sloop below
coherence

wish i could un-now
into the long ago before falling off
the rocky sunset. i'd go to the library, but it's
a charred ziggurat

downtown pedestrians
change colour, neon stars burn the corneas
of seven-to-whenevers, sky
dreaming Fiesta

Magenta, Sunstroke Magma,
Umbra Penumbra. Miss Lois, can you read me?
of course not, i have no user name
sound stops whenever i move

i can only see paddies
of shredded wheat full of odious flora
horrible fauna. fake-work trucks
heckle Cinderellas

warbling *Arbeit Macht Frei*
while Big Ben tolls in no-fly zones,
Marinetti hard on the horn again snickering
as landmarks smack his windshield

Tang Dynasty

i once wore Tomorrowland
around my neck. *Welcome! It's Always Open House*
in the Future, Jetsons curled in the tailpipes
of Life magazines

melamine dreams, Resinox
promise, Lauxite caves. say it with Scriptite and
the wind calls Lady Clairol. tweak your
rabbit ears. colorized fays

skirl across the coffee table
Jack Kennedy takes me to his leader.
frozen pizzas batter knotty pine, pole lamps
jump 1-2-3 red light

i stand tagged and luminoled
from a lineage of unknowns posed in sombre
costumes assembled from dead animals
disposable races

another day in the Tang Dynasty
they drained Lake Erie. notes appeared
on palm trees. *missing parrot, eats sunflower seeds*
indoor schnauzer

answers to George. blind in one eye
we miss you, see you soon, love Rose, like the flower
all things on Earth lost or leaving yet still
waiting for the crackle

Monday night's the banjo playing in the alley-o
i like the radio and i like - Miss Lois it's Miss Lois
calling our user names, Miss Lois
calling us back

catch and release

ceiling fan

according to Kirk's Seiko my eyes have driven over 1300 kms across the top
of the photo

still obsessed with the year we acquired our symptoms. precisely 5:33, summer
of '65, new neighbours red in the dark

i'm convinced about the light in the clinic, the cool metal gurney. the wind rises
Edith, a smiley-woman walking through the gentle fall of knives. you know
something, i say to her. She does not answer

the telephone bawls. what are the men on the hill doing with the morning light?
more bones? i turn the wringer off. the washing machine turns, faces the wall

father & son

Kirk's father, Marlowe, is a one-eyed backhoe operator, more or less morally rigid
his citronella smile floating in the silver pail on the table

poor Kirk, his bookish nose no longer chases joggers. bedtime ogre by age forty
dapper speedily receding. eyebrows crowd his square eyes, creases trickle down
his green chins, his uncut hand catching, releasing, catching

the garden plot

we live consistently overcast in the din of lady's slippers and the muttering of hostile
soil Kirk says just one crop of saran wrap will do. beans shuffle up and down the
corridors
as Edith's dirndl skirts spill over the ironing board

storms tear the roofs off pomegranates. cows chew boxes of strangers under a sky lit
by shattered plates. a cloud of unfired drilling permits flood the garden plot. fruit flies
consume the amber river

wild rose petals smite the ground. every gravestone becomes the mahogany table
Kirk
had inherited the night old bones deafened our neighbours and the Catholics rooted
in discarded Maytags

suburbia

ixora hedges protect the bright from the huge, where kings and queens once
castellated
two-car garages to hide from the immense. the river has bodies to bury

cul-de-sacs doze in over-wrought silence, weighted by the eighties, sunlight made of
metal tubing. so we cling bright and small against the darkness. surrounded by
we have so that we can be

gumbo

the subdivision goes forth and multiplies. every couple of hours Kirk lives in the
ghetto near the old John Deere where Ogopogo was once sighted, paws stuck in
spring gumbo

it doesn't take long for us to establish a routine. Kirk glowers into the corners under
my bed until it's too dark to read them and things topple off the TV

the family galoshes shine in that dim room. the telephone moults on the mahogany table. fastidious Edith butters everyone's bread and i imagine, sometimes twice a day Dante's burning plains

christmas

Christmas eve is a floral TV tray. well, says Kirk, twisting the cap to the crowd's loud applause. crab appetizers make thick swallowing sounds. i mop the blood around

we peck in the dark. Kirk speaks first, she didn't actually puke did she? Edith says she did a good job vacuuming. Kirk says, Hoovers never puke after sucking. i fork something into my mouth. Kirk sticks his out. we look at him in shock, it is so rare

Marlowe clucks, here's some pickles, take a pickle

shift

beyond the blood-drop berries, sky paused between stations
full of eerie star babble sent millions of years ago into toadstools
where the dead shift during the silence before the long dash

refuse to name those who would pull you under, refuse to feed them
even as they grow hungrier and howl louder under stars which are
really alien suns, not who – or where - you think they are



wonder years

during the week Paul lives with his mother, where the new father does something in an office. every Friday Paul sees his REAL FATHER, who is a railway man and drives trains across the country. when he meets his real father, Paul tells him he ate a lot of MEAT. Paul must eat meat every day, or be eaten by meat. Paul GROWS a couple of inches up the wall and he is sent to school, a school for children who all FIGHT. Paul doesn't want to fight. Tuesday morning, Paul faces the blackboard. numbers ATTACK him. next week, Paul's real father comes to school and leaves Paul a RAW STEAK he had bought from the man in the trenchcoat at the railway station. every Friday Paul sees his real father, tells him he played CAR or WAR. Monday, Paul is on the bus. SCHOOL STARTS AGAIN

sumac grimoire

you may disregard me
just another strange diorama, the usual
stuffed owls, wicker strollers
oaken finials

maybe one should start
in the cemetery, November gloom
when i was born, heaven far
but somewhere

dense stand of lumber
in the misty thicket. backhoes
fold the sod, warm curl
of homesteads

buffalo stalled in wallows like hills
not really hills, only looking like hills
among bullwhips dreaming
Mesopotamia

**

Shanty Bay Road lies in a valley
of dollars. uncured Huronias jeer
sunset frescoes at concession
lines

show homes hiss in the flank
of Medonte Mountain running molten
rock to the Lunatic Asylum for
Chronic Patients

every hour or so a white-coated
butler brings the tray
of Graperoo

i'm in ever-changing B –
Cadillac-Fairview city of tragic beauty
where big hats putter down
popomatic highways

grim ballads keen from Sam
the Record Man at Five Corners, the jukes
on Dunlop, unmoored wah-wahs
fluid as seaweed

**

Thunder Bridge
must cross hand-over-hand, maudlin
clouds scud overhead, suddenly woods,
a leaning chimney covered
in ivy

that house is haunted
said the fisherman *i warned you*
not to come here

i didn't come
one of my servants, a fellow
i brought from the jungle
carried me here

my bloodline leads me
through the ruins of Girls Owns
purled from tongues only
my dream self knew

side door opens. a girl
in a flannel nightgown steps into
a menacing soundtrack, *bit It*
and you'll get It

she leads me into
the moss-covered mansion
escorts me to the Coronation plates
made in Taiwan

bouquet of parasols
in an elephant foot basket, roughly
washed, reddish Hudson's Bay
with black stripes

**

i dress formally
pledge allegiance to the Queen
spend summers inside the head
of a cabbage

i count my teeth, cut the crusts
off cucumber sandwiches, dimes
chime down the arm of the Empire
slot machine

blue telly bawling, *but General*
don't you understand? we must keep it
alive! we must we must

frost shocks the Doulton
but come spring the figurines
will be aeons taller

LM Montgomery bellows
soliloquies into the wee smalls
after pounding the piano, she leaves
the keys to freeze on the
kitchen floor

rain binds windows
in winding-sheets, the North Star
jimmies the screen door, a sumac
grimoire

christmas eve

after my father
got the dog drunk several
colours went missing
even rose, a colour
i often use

currently caught up in electric
yule logs, a 'Tiny Tears Jesus
three wise guys dressed
in house coats and
tea towels

my crystal ball is shedding
in the eddy of the propeller
of a four-engine plane
(unlike diarists of the past
i offer what is of little
importance)

i see crowds of unplowed
flowers cropped by herds of cities
ocean an unlabelled bag
full of spotted cod
in butter

incited by religion
i search for the whitest
repro of my personal god
in the midst of infinite
relativity

gods! everywhere gods
rain gods, volcano gods, gods
of odd socks, gods in vodka
bottles, gods in the penalty
box at Vimy

i roll through a hole in the wall
and fall to the parlour. at last
the one-eyed sofa rises from
the shadows

*you see the falling leaves are returning
to the trees* i murmur. what else do
you say to an ottoman who orders
you to explain christmas

mother's mother's sister

Joyce lived in the house left to her mother by her mother's aunt, who was Joyce's GREAT AUNT THURZA but Joyce couldn't understand what that meant. she wrote on her reading comprehension TEST that a great aunt was an OLD LADY (who wore elastics around her wrist and long grey sweaters with balled up kleenexes in deep pockets) and ended up with a red X beside her answer. Joyce liked TREES better, anyway. she followed the trees with her eyes as they flew into the distance. one day a STAKE appeared on the vacant lot. it came from Osso Bucco, the gross REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER who had already paved the FIELD. after pulling the stakes out of the vacant lot, Joyce looked up at the sky. some clouds looked like her great-aunt, who was Joyce's MOTHER'S MOTHER'S SISTER, who was now DEAD. there was now no such thing as her mother's mother's sister. soon there would be no vacant lot. HOW CAN SOMETHING BE THERE ONE DAY AND GONE THE NEXT? as soon as Joyce opened the door to her bedroom, the Robert Wood landscape fell to the floor, revealing a small window above her bed. was this here THE WHOLE TIME, Joyce wondered before raising the sill and climbing down the wall

far nearaway

hunkered over the handle-
bars of my hamster wheel, churning down
the murky streets of Coffin Town

devout Propertarians
plot the grid of tradition, fend off madness
rising from newly mown lawns

last orchard drips fables
over sleepy backhoes, weepy birches crawl
single-file into the fire pit

already gone into the near
away, every where i was i was no where

core

polyester

lilies, tiled hallways, eternal dawn

canned

ennui

spectral blurt, dirty ritual

escalators

ravenous food courts

craven expansion

plans

American

storefronts, Asian factories

cruddled undercloud

mud

limpets

in Sleep Country

walk through the covered

logo

no matter how dark

you know where

you are

tween

good bones you were born with a 7-slot grille. raised on SelecTrac, tested in 5 key areas. fabulous suspension, ground clearance, *proven* star-power **play** so much to do. afternoon mani-pedi. 50 back-flips, pageant walk. *don't forget* to reduce tummy fat **star-gazing** 2-carat stars, bold, breath-taking, not sold in stores. rhinestone icons slice years off your snap-on Faceplate. some day you will appear on slurpee cups across America **family values** you luv mum's bedtime stories and ask her to read them again and again. *after 4 Weeks Radical Fast-Acting Dynakor gives you 100% Improvement on Follicle Clarity. Convenient Clinically Proven Medifast will make your weight loss dream come true* **playdate debut** now you're in the preschool biz full-time. you killed it in twin-tower stilettos **parent-teacher meeting** mum always has your back, *being hot doesn't just happen – she needs those liposuction updates sent directly to her phone*

acclaim Newsday says you are simplicity itself, no towering rack of knobs or dials. according to the Philly Daily *this 30-day Excitement Guarantee is risk-free* **1st Larry King interview** *they lobbied us with poles and boat propellers. we must listen to our president.* cover your mouth, come up with a whoops or excuse-me thing when you burp on air **affirmation** you are *so* a good person, custom made with name and birthdate inscribed on a locket by the artist, Holly. *success will never stop me from finding my very own McSomeone* **coming-of-age** you're second generation bioactive, free of your mother's belts, *supermarket* miracle pills, wonder diets, rubber suits **finding yourself** you can move up and down, side to side, zoom in with a single click. you come in Platinum White, Graphite Gray, 6 inches deep when displayed. user-friendly, your flipscreen is on from the moment it hits your Target bag

control you hold all the chain and cord options. over 180 words to your name. fans can record, pause, replay, store you up to 500 hours in their homes **heartbreak** he bought you a yogurt, said he wanted out. what designer bag do you need now? Kooba? Fenda? Gucci?Coach one week, Bulga the next. *are you a Cheat?* **oops** you did it again. savoured all 8 entrees in spite of *your weight* **giving back** you donate your leopard print 5" training stilettos to AIDS babies in the Sahara and *cried* over the plight of the overweight impacted by climate change **tween angst** *dear Jesus, sometimes, for no reason my face breaks out in Juicy Couture. does Enzyme Pumpkin Masque ease red-eye? will Frédéric Fekkai Cider really stop an outbreak of Cubic Zirconia? or is this yet another Santa scam* **dear Jesus** i'm starting to doubt the Master Card idyll of my childhood!

infection!

g-gosh, Donna, you're not like all the OTHER girls. oh Tommy, kiss me. kiss me HARD. hey, what was that? it landed right by us. a few minutes later. JUMPING CATFISH! what is it? it looks like some sort of ROCKETSHIP and ... and i think there's something inside it. ZOT! Great Scott, Tommy! Greetings puny earthgirl. gaze into my eye. you cannot resist the hypnotic eye of the almighty GWONDANA. come to me, earthgirl. how ya doing? come feel my ALL-KNOWING embrace. with this kiss i take your mind. your will is MY WILL, so speaks the almighty GWONDANA. now, worthless underling, you hold within you the seed of my INFECTION. now GO! infect your miserable species with my kiss of death. i need slaves! i need an army of LOVE SLAVES. yes, almighty GWONDANA. your wish is my command

true romance

my DREAMS are bad, real bad. bad dreams? what are you talking about? it's AWFUL. every night i have the same dream. i find myself walking down a long highway, SCHOOL BELLS keep ringing. i'm LOST, Tommy. i'm on this highway and i can't remember which class i'm supposed to be in. finally i open the door to a classroom. some of the kids look familiar. i find a seat and notice everyone is hard at work on a TEST. the other kids keep looking at me, snickering. then the walls and ceiling turn soft and fleshy, the room is filling up with BLOOD. i turn to warn the others, but they've changed into ALIENS and they're all LAUGHING at me. c'mon Donna, you're giving me the CREEPS. like i was saying, the room is filling up with BLOOD. everyone is swimming, trying not to DROWN. i know i can't hold on so i take one last breath and sink into darkness, NOTHINGNESS, my lungs are giving out. then i wake up. you don't need help, Donna, it's just a nightmare. everyone gets them. just sit here, relax and watch Leave It to BEAVER. all you need is ME, i'll make you feel better. WHOAH ... stop ... please stop. STOP. THAT HURTS. i'm really sore, Tommy. oh my GOD, Donna, you ... you're BLEEDING. ewww ... now I'M the one having the bad dream

the post-inevitable generation

1

been this way since the world began
to curdle into balladic shit already obsolete
by the time of King Canute

who knows where the Transistor Era
will take us?

i, for one, never dreamed
the Strolling Bones would one day
tumble their dice over
Frederick IV

along rue Seine i passed the Exploding
Plastic Inevitable. the new mouleur has hung
two plaster masks, Ali MacGraw and
Rod McKuen

late autumn is the perfect time
for Von Daniken ennui

you shoulda seen me in the Theban desert,
sitting at the feet of Creedence Clearwater Revival,
trying to understand life as the others do,
a Wham-O toy to bash around
the nursery

2

the fever dug into me
i OD'd on bad Gallo, laid to waste
by A Day In the Life, sure the Russkies
finally dropped the bomb
on us

somehow, i climbed out of
the terminal hiss back to social
existence

time, despite my efforts
to dress it in the official costume
of the Water Buffalo Lodge, passed so fast
the reverend Phil Donahue had to be
invited

the sleigh was ordered for eight o'clock

you gotta do something when you tire
of all that Ziggy Stardust and the cosmic
Pez dispenser is empty

3

it was in the year after Maman's death
i first noticed the burnt electrical reek
of Kraftwerk in the chateau Broussac

since then i have thought a lot about
my fear of Kraut Rock. i have never dared
buy a mandarin from Tangerine Dream

books are empty, shouted the Count, disguised
as Master of the Hunt. *it is DDT that matters*,
it is DDT we must learn to read

but nothing can cancel the reality of one night
in the revivifying fire of PK Dick

when for once, if only once you were blasted
outside the monotony of your life

all the way through the jello institutions
you don't understand except what the old men
from Ghent want you to believe

4

i'm trying to write but there's nothing to say
if you happen to be small and full
of foreboding

a sixteen year old girl rubbed into
the Silly Putty of small-city Canada

after Charles the Bold's downfall i spent
all winter sinking deeper into the nation's
rusting drainpipes

ending, perhaps inevitably at the mall,
where people hurled all over my halter top

the whole night should have been written off
by Stanley Kubrick

5

who says it's a big old world
take another look

the decor is tropicana north – pole lamps,
tiki bars, split-levels full of little skeletons
running into an eternal school day

again the silence,
Krishna knows who made it

i want to bay with i'm-okay-you're-okay joy
in the pit of the smoking charnel house
on top of Three Mile Island,
spilled blood of the dead
a foot deep

i want Idi Amin to see us

i want him to see every one of us

assumed

i've been price-dropped
into the new normal. traffic, decades
undead, shuffles over
the erased

middleclass stalled
in high mark-up scream inside
their pillowtop tanning
beds

quack doctors cut
the tongues out of bells, hundreds
of volunteer hours kept
in pits

bartenders pour ballistic
whiskey for razor-wire tourists.
every tire blowout
final

heat from personal
data burns acres of saleable forest
prepped for radical
surgery

epidemic of polling
firms spilling sackfuls of jargon
into starless census
forms

robo-calls from
third-parties pressed in jars
assumed dead or lost
in golden ice

applause from the base.
unrealtors repealing the real
in today's fantasy
bout

classic sheaves
of blond wheat march over my
girlhood to the Master
bedroom

wave

day one
week ten
six of one
two down, how many more
at the end of my rope
hope on a rope, one hope per day
but as much fear as you want
this is the law

all of you
so far away
from me

so
damn
far

take my life
fill it with sea
say my name, no, sing
how much i miss the sun, sky
and wind, the land
a long walk out of my mind

what is the true name
for this loss

what will you call me
if ever i come out
of this



rainless

deer already coming down from the hills. motor off, i drift neutral down a dirt road easing between greasy banks of a hollow full of depots and autobody shops. commuters swerve westbound on 80. city houses mutter into their lattes as they jostle each other for room, no rain to wash the soot from their skins. the sewers can't swallow the dust fast enough. dust crawls through doors, covers all the radiators and bare feet left on hardwood floors

unfinal frontier

the address arrives in a single crate, settles on a crag. i aim the telescope
at the consommé running through the hollows. Cassiopeia rushes down
the eavestrough, accompanied by a bagpipe band

some luggage rolls in. floor lamps minuet, goosenecks curl around
my chair. a plasma tv is stocked with bug-eyed fish terrified by personal
injury lawyers and live police

the microwave pops open to rumours of meatballs walking barefoot
down Abbey Road. a little Pole Star remains in the pot. i flip the hood
up, throwing craters, valleys, great walled cities into relief

the loud red

rear view

a trawler leans into a current of 8-track cassettes which no longer remember me
tomorrow a fresh chemical ditch is expected, or so the weathermen say
in the fjord below a poem struggles into immortal water shit

dusty swish of hush, the east-facing woman driving a service station into a night
that sits in a bar hating me

Edith pushes the broom into the rear-view mirror as blue packages pile up
behind her. she says, if you don't open them maybe he'll go away, or maybe he
won't come

irrevocable

the road becomes this gang of hills becoming mountains becoming screaming
hayricks

once i watched a hostage on tv released in Beirut, like tea poured by Edith then
a right straight into two old horses selling humanist brochures to the rear-view
mirror

juice boxes move like hearses already in shadow and empty chip bags clomp
doggedly into the almost

Toronto

Kirk was wrong, the gold-crowned mouths of Toronto open and close
they read top-bottom left-right. all-the-hits-all-the-time burst into the air
bereft of origin. in places the grey

muggy July. no slop pail for poplar refuse. noise of kohl-eyed rioters
prompt me to sob into the terrycloth nubs of my Commodore 64

hard return

Edith wipes her hands, tries to weave a conversation around eggs
she will never buy. after replacing the receiver she indicates i am
to put down the Pledge, take thirty steps backward

she fishes a cue ball out of her purse then taps my email against the
fire hydrant. a printer, ripping back and forth, buzzes out a bloody
text with fixed margins. then i, because i must, i open it again

as a joke, Kirk pushed his dish to the centre of the table
his fingertips scorched. i nearly choked as he jerked the joystick
Dukhobours frolicked in naked streets

valuation

the electric heater shows slides proving i once dressed in pesticides
and aerosol tea. This, Edith whispers, is the Clock of the Apostles
where we keep all the plots

Edith collects handwritten pleas and vinyl testimonials. i am the one
who has to value the china cabinet full of beheaded detergent bottles

the card table is covered in crushed trucks. a chair careens through
the air. she takes a Lego man from the boat, drops him in the drink
then the RCA Victor rattles and spits out the property tax bill

as executrix i have to sign the plate of congealed lamb beside her bed

the sound of flowers

careful now, he said. it's hot. blow on it. that's not Proud Mary, that's
the sound of flowers bursting from your body

do you feel better now? yes, thank you. i didn't pick any more vegetables
after that, not even ripe specula from Aunt Inga's garden

respectable women feigned disgust, though they knew these men had for
generations. when the scabs tried to, Kirk reached back, hauled out a tree

i helped myself into the cement. the police thought i handled the incident
very well. Edith giggling then laughing outright, sure her sacrifice outdid
mine. if anyone can hang curtains properly, it's her

tunnel

Kirk always chose the dinner wine, the tins of relief food, the light in
the clinic. screaming hot chicken wings turned his mouth into a tunnel

somewhere out there in black night is a man red with certainty no one
would ever know and i would never tell

moai

i row my sweet
and ghostly way, bleeding
not yet bleeding
to death
along the shore
of the wandering island
in the black Atlantic
i fling
my kit bag into
the bottom drawer, hang
the uniform in the closet
and walk through
a picture window into
the twinkly lake

crop circle buried
in cloud
at the bus stop
fungi blowing conches
on abandoned
pianos
the island
is roaming again, moai
gushing flue gas
i climb the steps
of my moonlit eyes. low
tide, no landing, no
free falls
here

disappearance

1

sounds like a frisian whistling through the port, ships arriving empty and leaving with pallets full of shadows. mine not among them. my shadow disappeared somewhere between the river and the mountains. i enter a bardo state and purchase a cheese sandwich, speaking to the cashier as if i had just escaped from a memory castle

2

all the shadows in the asylum are massed behind walls. i've been registered sane and not permitted inside (this time either) but i surveil all the gravel lanes, paths taken by inmates, their caretakers and the trees, silver in half-light, shuffling back and forth. behind the graveyard is a field where they make the shadows grow clouds, mine is not here either. curfew is announced.

3

smoke from the west, dust tasting of pumpkin spice, walmart bags frolicking across volcanic rock. near the border, stars draft oil tankers racing down the one-lane highway leading to more foothills. long trek to the gates where guards shine lights in my eyes. they can see i have no shadow and they release me. superstores clank over scrub where no shadow ever existed

4

i turn down even darker streets. unmarked police cars follow me until i pass the industrial park and can finally eat the cheese sandwich. main street skirts a billboard displaying the clay mask of another politician vowing to lock up illicit shadows

5

the peatmaster lives in a tiny house on a rocky outcrop overlooking a series of valleys. flicker of bonfire, more trees advancing from the west. i climb the dolomite, watch until the trucks turn to dust. my job is to walk the paths, clear away corpses, order women, children, old people to go inside and not come out into open night. i have never missed my shadow more

6

all the light is dead, all this light emitted millions of years ago, everything that no longer exists or is kept alive by memory, is here now, covered in smoke. i pass two columns of soldiers marching along the coast, dressed in steel helmets and winding-sheets. there, middle column, my shadow glances at me, looks away without missing a beat

in the skin of mysteries

so i was dumped onto a boat,
left to bang my head on cloud banks. finally, after
many weeks, an idea drifts over the edge of my brain where
Columbus never planted a flag and monsters
still rule the ocean blue

unseen by the skeleton crew i drop
over the port side. i reach land. the place is pale, nameless,
i cleave to the road leading to a cove. migrating stars
nip at my heels

a river slips out of pack ice, explodes
behind me. i look back, someone took the cove away. the reek
of hickory smoke lures me to the hotel, i am
already checked in

table lamps leap over the bed.
i beat back all the vines and invasive pheasants then
pluck a wrench from my violin case, start in on the TV. i draw
the curtain before streetlights can plunder
the mini-bar

lizards race away from the drunken
Gideon lurching around the drawer, moon shearing the bones
of the fire escape where reality was murdered
by a mob of lawn mowers

police card all the people emerging
from winter, ashen faces prepped for blasting. illicit assembly,
no drumbeats or chants, just eyes pounding
and stomping in the sun

gobbets of history float like tripe
in a poorhouse broth. newspapers sing dirges, push their
wheelbarrows past the click-bait pits where
the snarling children
crouch

surgery

the saloon door shuts, i find myself
alone in a cemetery where people disappear every day
i swallow my dose of graveyard seed. still the settlement
cheque doesn't arrive

i am tossed into a county hospital.
the cells where they grow mushrooms lie in permanent
night but i'm always ready for back-room
surgery

even the vines and pheasants are silent
tonight. i remove the vial, pull the stopper. polar ice
drips into oceans raising their level little by little
until waves crash against the feet
of skyscrapers

autumn

sidewalks quell a whoop-up
of tree roots. herd of bearded elk stuck in
traffic. madwomen peering through
the smoke of magic tricks
gone wrong

the theatre has eaten its players.
in the museum, people lick the paint off
the Monet when they think no one
is looking. no one
ever is

autumn, first responder
at the Twitter pileup, triaging hearts shot
through with arrows, people falling
through their own hollow
earths

repeal

i sail a dirge down furtive carpets in rooms cold as shark-fin soup, chairs playing
poker with broken necks, sheets smeared with hemorrhoid cream. zygotes flee across
the TV screen. the wretched hotel calls the Morality Squad, some Gideon left a new
testament in the drawer, everyone knows the Good News was repealed in 2016.
users of religion are instructed to consult Leviticus. all hotels in the city have installed
a snitch line making me
a spy in this cryptic epoch and it is cold, heavy fog
drifting in, the ship sounds far away too
far to sea

undercover

when the phone rang i was in the kitchen unpacking groceries. a very long time passed before the Magistrate returned. i woke up staring at the ceiling wondering how much i really knew about the world, and that was what I thought about while placing the cover back on the well just before i rode my bike to the train station. the Magistrate was a bald man who wore gold-rimmed glasses. i reached the ford just before dusk. what woke me was the click of a rifle's safety being released. i left the café and wandered the streets. at home, i showered and burped the phone before setting it to charge. first thing i did in the darkness was feel around the well bottom with my toe, clutching the ladder in case i needed to flee. when i woke, the mouth of the well had turned the blue of a moonless night. the Magistrate kept walking at the same steady pace. *don't turn on the light*, said a voice as autumn closed in. next morning i took the train again and walked from the station to the Federal Building, which stood a short way up a gentle slope. i continued sitting long after the men left the room. in no mood for bad air, i walked as far as i could and followed the man with the guitar case down the steel ladder to the bottom where eight officers were loading the children onto a cart. eight o'clock went by and when i closed the kitchen light, i felt a presence. rain tapered off toward dawn but the smell of the strange little man and his unfiltered cigarettes lingered in the house long after the train had left the station. the wind sent one grey cloud after another. wool hat pulled low to my eyes, i scaled the back wall and lowered myself to the well floor. the dark looked exactly as i remembered. it took the Magistrate ten minutes to reach me. Room 208 was unlocked, just as the man with the guitar case warned. *i promise*, i said, but my voice sounded like a recording of myself speaking. water up to my throat, i watch the lights of the little towns flow past the window and when they are lost to sight, i imagine a moon

sleep, interrupted

you can wake suddenly
deepest perhaps there where
stars throw down their
spears

oarless coracle bobs
through vast sad, the void snaps
a top hat out the hollow
citadel

numb rooms full
of criminal hymnals. rubber
corridors trampled thread
bare

the lantern door locks
a distinct click long snicking
rhythm of blackened
lack

day rustles purple
moments of war float, quiet
inviolable stacked in
the sink

a book crawls on
its belly, keeps still a while
flattens against forest
floor

books written in
one truth read in another
truths true as any
other truth

vacant condos
marching the barrens, sun
shining some other
country

hissing brokers
foreclose on dreaming eyes
grasping castles in west
tenebrous

you recoil from
the stale smell of silent grief
how did a false sun
lure you so far

you never hear
the birds, no bird could
live in the cheap
cologne

that eddies here
you can breathe it, like it too,
it will smell sweeter
in time

solo

chitter of
bureaucrats suddenly loud and beyond
red sand roads, piney
woods

after the city crashes,
lost friends run aground. they swap
faces, disperse into twilight
no-time

hilariously bilious
toilet at the bottom of an elevator
shaft. i turn left and
drown

clouds rush the moors
of Room 1710. people raft down
escalators, i peer into
crevices

hoodied figures idle
in a hall slick with black ice. i jump
into the dumpster full of
specimens

Jackson Hole Motel 6,
full of cross-purposes. the kitchen
closes. i know people dis-
appear here

after ruining the
Chaucer exam, i end up in the brig.
a cop hassles my pencils.
i may be in Riga

i creep across
the floorboards and roll down-
hill into an all-night
tidal pool

the python stirs
in my arms. i head for Antwerp
and miss le dernier
métro

herd of backhoes
cropping Grosz bushes, palling
our second-growth
roads

huddled with all
the other Weimars at Café Prag,
fog purls the streets below
the castle

at the Gallery
in Inuvik no one is talking about
the ghosts who won't
be gone



redundant

my hometown, north of here, withers along a lake but i'm used to leaving it, this time following the guard to a small hot room covered with time clocks. steam machines hiss, saws bark and choke, wire service tickets clatter, the day starts babbling. i usually work in a musical format but the office is full of arithmetic dressed in powdered wigs, rouged cheeks paling under the display model of a hydrocarbon. loud perfume of starch and bleaching fluid, redundant stories run by compressed air pumps. the idea is always make a tree into a log, a log into a plank

re-port

i drop through twilight into a lost-valley town kneeling at the feet of the oil derricks. a chinook wind spooks politicians into vomiting all the welcome banners they have eaten. past the aspen then left on a green belt clinched between the housing tracts and the intractable sea to Motel Row. my suite at Mariner's Rest is webbed with wifi. bottles loll on the table as if a party is ready to erupt, again, but i won't let that happen, the report is due. i open my laptop, slap some syllables on the screen. they refuse to be saved and disappear, leaving me to ripple alone in the dark

come sunrise i am briefed on all the products and services i can purchase before washing my hands in the ashen window. newsfeeds gear up, cutting, flaying, bundling the day. shriek of rumours striking the copping block. my head is off-kilter but i follow the first heideggers into a city full of moai high on the fumes of profit. chipped teeth spill into the street. smell of cordite, open veins of personal malice sluicing into the oncoming season. every year fewer urine tests return to spawn

night stumbles behind me into the suite. after scrubbing the paranoia off my toes i sit at the table. must write the report but no matter how much concealer i apply to my corpse-paint lexicon the words refuse to march around the template. instead they refill the glasses, fasten a collar and leash on me, jeering as they upload the video until a deep dark wood breaks through the wall

kingdoms of the blind

I
good morning spider
rising above bedlam
humour me, please

say i'm in search of
sunrise and this must
be the place (naïve
melody)

under the eye of Juju
Security i take the veil
of dress code, enter
today's conspiracy

Orpheus escorts me
through the stratosfear
to my Aeron chair

lost cosmonauts ghost
the hundredth window

mummers clog global
servers. seraphim trace
icons in limbo

white-out event
download hard core
Purgatorio

audiostream the Impossible
news from no where
wish i could still
write home

tell them how jets seem
slower in kingdoms
of the blind

II

priests of the golden bull
play polkas from hell on
pocket calculators

painbirds in Armani
nurse their glasses
of magical thinking

Thievery Corp orders ten
new rolling people into
Crazy Egypt

calendars chime over
the screaming delirium
of email

modern cavemen
follow weepy donuts
to the boardroom
early start, Toronto
minotaurae hunt
at dawn

Volga Boatmen drag
hooks across polished
naugahyde, talk into
the starfish under
Ulysses's gaze

Mephisto presents
estimated demiurge
holy egoism of
engineering genius

time to diagram
the gematria, flipchart
the rain forest

afternoon turns
our faces split
the gouda in two

Stockholm Syndrome
sets in the west. only
the strange remain

Desperate Project Managers

I good-natured badinage

*they come, one by one, Upstream, Production, Unconventionals. Frontier –
Deepwater Offshore pushes the button. elevator rises. oil prices fall*

the bonobos at Conoco would float Karnak between Bullwinkle and Mars
Ultradeep Tertiary. who's revving new execution. bluett flinched first
he who wins loses

II cranky servers

*the managers swipe smartcards, enter their office suite sequestered in the nameless
building northeast of the downtown core. they log in. global zotob invokes Open Text
maelstrom*

Mad Dog played catch-up with Aquatics.
batch-set 3 wells. drilled a tangent, drop-in salt. one run per hole. Ontrak semi-sub
precipitated hydrates and scale, shallow hazard, rotary steerable
tiny, big tits, 35 for a half and half, back up
when the eggs shift gear

III intractable contractors

*our heroes scry ouija screens, tap dead keyboards. bulkloads stall. hard drives grizzle
[compile error in hidden module]. encrypted docs zip C to L*

so we go in there, we go in there
the bodies hung from trees, you could see em. sucks, Russ, tell Bechtel, go to hell
reclaim your own goddam skeletons, move em out
toot sweet

IV gettin er done

team members buckle up, ready their cubicles for the business day

fire-breathing moratorium. Submerged Land Act. multinational
witch hunts. Public Enemy No 1. national marine sanctuaries want to prohibit
seabed offshore.

played devil's advocate, too many things missing
Schlumberger dropped the ball. no cement bond? trot out dog-n-pony
ramp up empathy. we need a group photo, team hug
awww

was there a sweep-n-swath on the zodiac
just sayin

V information management

*coffee machines drum regular, premium, V-power. team-mates summon memos,
murmur numbers down the atrium, plot tomorrow's gematria*

associated gas our achilles heel
unresolved doughnut hole. ground elevation sunk ten or more feet
security breach. Green Canyon 782. Colombian? all we have is chai tea. underreamed
structural regime. inedible. well, as they say in Pipelay,
nothing's indelible

gather attack stats. validate metadata. edit written evidence in advance
the records landed in an intake pond. order more body bags. a couple percocets
for joint panel reports

VI dirty dishes

*stocks plummet, competition rumbles. the managers brainstorm in the coffee oasis,
among the bathymetry charts, mandatory safety meeting notices and a yellow sticky-
note posted above the tap that says **we are not paid to clean up after you***

Deepwater Mad Dog, non-starter sand, casing failed
nipple to plunger. dilated orifice. all incremental, like shittin a kitten through the
crack
how many fucken ducks do we need anyway. Soup of the Day, hmmm
merganser nodules. slow comfortable hydrocarbons
a motherhood issue

VII undisclosed glucose

*sunset flares. the managers glance at the bulletin board covered with the day's threats,
ransom notes, hostage takings, Corporate Challenge sign-up forms, dressage at Spruce
Meadows*

minimal dogleg
those flaming energy clowns
jimbo, that cinnamon bun has your name
on it. get the girl to spin
brown sugar
death

VIII midnight taxonomy

*a flat screen TV dreams in CNN. the pariahs remember when vision-missions rained
from heaven, ferraris rolled into the lobby, the loading dock processed boatloads of
recruits*

over 12 *million* livid ivies. shh, you're upsetting the kudzu
boo hoo. ducks aren't stupid. they're going for the photo op, nature voodoo, all any
species wants is a Big Mac. me, i'm Pacific Rim anti-semantic camp. migrate the
content
make it intuitively more usable. call it illicit *mistletoe*
i'm not dying on that hill

IX outside the box

*under the benign eye of the Refinery of the Month, Sunrise Over Sarnia, colleagues
mull value-added solutions to save the business day from costly delay*

golf balls, styrofoam, nuclear submarines
world's biggest Sham-Wow. break in the blowcase impacts amaretto
at the end of the day we're all imbricated. maybe she'll lick it
only way it comes off

X water cooler

*in spite of fines, lawsuits, backward paperclips, redacted internal mail envelopes,
purloined drawing packages, missing cement bond logs, our heroes ensure quantitative
measures*

levee-up mean sea level
full moon, fucken flood
river running blood

early christian dead
drove my chevy

The End

de-homed I

omen generation

here on the other side of Normal
a cloud throws shade across another

house I can't afford
a low-lying front of big-box billionaires is blocking the sun
no longer citizens or even human, we are the omen generation living in tunnels
covered in fungi, remnant forest, organic or plastic. strange creatures abide here
i scoot through the condolands to my hollow, walls leaking charcoal, tallow,
diminished prospects
tired of the all-night people tolling at the Red Gates, i have slept too long under this
trickle-down fable
it's time to follow the positive-thinking memes, embrace turbo-determinism,
welcome the gig economy

i swipe at cobwebs covering the parapet
at Churchill

Square

the pathologist bends over a body. he bawls his findings through a bullhorn. some
people applaud, others boo, monies change hands
i sit on a headstone, open a social media account. cloud-faces remind me nothing is
more important than the eyeball-harvest. as a new influencer i am the human face of
the non-stop aggregates
every moment of the day my face smiles, tumbles into dismay, always moving with
the times. bad news, post an extreme selfie, show empathy, ensure followers know
i'm a real human packed with tear-jerker ballads

after years of retreating the Tower
has finally disappeared, the scaffolding

that led to the moon collapsed years ago
election night, tiki torch parades, bonfires. the Watchman left his post but they still
activate the mechanical crickets ten o'clock on the dot
phones hiss and spit, all the strange voices skirling around me. i generate click-bait,
innuendo. i tweet with wit, invite randos to the convo, amass my army of eyeballs
the bells are raising the trolls, a dog howls, a child falls. night, fleeing the enraged
sun, curls into cellars. could the death-toll numbers be spiked? is climate change a
hoax? is cultural genocide even a thing?
A mega-church belches. A homeless pulls a tulip out of a planter, eats the bloom,
spits the rest out
polls suggest, contrary to the new testament, most neighbours are unloveable, the
poor should be ashamed of themselves
do we even need a new testament?

a gravel road leads to the mouth
of an old tunnel full of

rheumatoid arthritis. what is XOFLUZA? side effects include being shot during
combat by a Dollar General. learn why i rely on Metamucilage to repair bone damage
more empty condos lapping Old Town Square where they replaced the runaway
clock tower with a sun dial. do you really need numbers?
every day i choose to be at my greatest elongation from the sun and so should you
like you, i've had to be schooled in the value of essential oils. here's my secret, i keep
age at bay by reaping the shadows of dead holy-men, a holistic program tailored to
body, mind and spirit. shadow extraction is good for your skin and for the planet
since they changed the laws you can extract human matter and quietly bottle the
spirits of the dead without the politically woke evoking Hades

wonderstruck athunder

gruel world

the more grise to my elbow the harder i gruel,
the longer my spoon the merrier my cans
of choclately bilk (swiss condensed version)

o fellow underlords, the Law does not aloud me
to shout the Outback's dead heart

christian brethren panning spent planets
just to taste the coalfired goodness
of CloudBurgher

iAsbestopol!
my bourse is on course

million-pound sterling troll the atoll,
turnkeyed out of their berms over the chum
needed to keep one barrel of bounty aroll

celerity apprentice

lower the Planckgang
place that T-square of burial jade upright
release the eight o'clocks

legalentitleds peck spicy dayographs
out of incentivized sky
never dip in the earn with open browsers
lest ye attract rusty Octobrists

work for progress heave ho
saviourize your labour
while you have enough litebrite

newrosis

i saw the first AIs rise from gullies
of pixels inked in Pantone Multimirror

humenymys belly-up in newrological stew,
who can say whom we are looking through

every honest-to-god caught in backlight
can upload the apocalypso glo
of paylater

de-treed, redeemed
algorhymed and rhizomed
all-inclusive

Gullible's tribbles

we are all uploads
wonderstruck athunder down yonder,
uniswoon shipalone under cover
(Protected A)

mystic christian eschatology
crosses a million beds baths
and beyond

the whole pyramid scheme
rumbleth dumbnation from
on Hi

faux-newsmen! wood-be this-worlders
curl up in your own parsonal bethels
of warship

ottomanic antivaxxers dirge up
pastfuls of bloody altarations

there's this - the Face-of-Jesus
All U Can Eat Valu Menu
(like and share

if you come across it
on your Gullible's tribbles)

vestigial

the mappamund has repatterned
since time first committed murmury
in my ear canal

i'm Big Man-In-The-Sky
five-storey semi-detached
in Sylvania's vorted ampire
(stained glass fx)

bookmarked by the lost
i've become a worse and worse
copy of myself

wasted with Wantit
i rise to as many as plausible
of the Ten Bombardments
except the one about hatenot
havenots

the bizness day never ends for us,
my friends

no matter how i throw the clay,
it always goes awry

humble in jumbo continuum,
kneedeep in this terroir of hours
over-run by Ford Erinyes

unvisited yesterselves
ghosted in this old game
of haunt

deadline

welcome to the daily opening
of the floodgates

i dig through ground fog,
add flavour and freshness to
the day's sketches of
missing girls

delete another opportunity
to monetize the joy
in my life

i am pitied by the committee
for sinking to the bottom
of the barrel

seasons fly off the wheels
of trucks. i grow eelgrass
theories, hot proxy
economies

social media, gutted by
vast egos, lies on the border
of murder

rosy crucians accost me
in the skeezy Twitter bus depot
prompting an emergency
alert

it's the Alberta government
ordering me to wear a helmet
to protect myself from memories
of better days

Netflix execs painted over
the final episode of False Start
with a jaunty boating scene before
donating it to a thrift store

i sand an old wooden Sunday
wonder why people keep throwing
them in the ravine

a glacier waves as it slides by
the window. the mirror returns
the face of the crowd

must make all my midnight calls
by noon

scirocco

1

gentlemen, our limo awaits. overalls, rubber apron, hard hat, tattoos, knives up the wazoo, bloody bits, fat lip, can't even spit up. i'm drug-free, bud, willing to work, pee in a cup, my mind is a hard bright city where powerful uncles dwell. here we go, life's road, my friends. it's late, i'm tired. so here we are, The Lairage, Total Confinement Resort and Spa. exotic hot dog slides, bacon champagne, top quality propylene. i see Kaneko by the pool raking the steam with a long hooked pole. must be the stunbolt springs, saw it online. listen to em, they almost sound human. thing to keep in mind about Freddy, Porky, Babe. stop naming them, against company policy. they're all charm, so goddamn cute. sure, they're loveable, crooked as hell though, not to be trusted, don't ever trust em. can't wait to go for a soak, anyone bring a water board

2

can't sleep, worst spa ever, hiss of power hoses, walls so thin we can hear em piss. make like it's a party, broken glasses of opa, flowing ashtrays. shit, why aren't we invited. going to melt in this heat. why aren't you shaved like everyone else. don't have a razor. where you from. i speak five languages, even Tagalog. Kaneko was so weak he shat through a hole in the floor, so loud we couldn't hear Aleppo disappear. i will say nothing about the exam but one day i was hustled onto the welcome wagon, brought to some asylum. police know pigs. they're smart, they pretend they're human. maybe they got the same soft bellies, hearts, livers, don't make em human, how many times do i got to. Kaneko took stress leave. when i passed his house all i heard was squeaking, squeaking, squeaking. in the end he ended up in the Funny Farm

3

head's up, hoofsters, move, move. she'll bring a good price, strong legs, our lucky day. keep trotting along. we might get more. so this march is going and going, forever we march, the ones who don't fall down from all this marching. move, move. yeh yeh, no room to fall. inspectors be coming. fix the goddamn awning, polish the logo, shuffle the chairs in the boardroom. whoa, Mr Bigshot hasn't guts to look me in the eye but free hotdogs on Friday. sprayers on HI. open your mouth, girl, i want to count your teeth. is she shaved. it's April of what weak day. good grief, what happened to me, went to bed feeling okay. fifteen minutes to zap, degut, dispatch to the chillers. ten second stun then cut its fucken throat. i am civirized per-son, Kaneko used to say that. i liked him better when he was funny. c'mon, give us a smile, there goes a good old girl

4

she was a friend of Anja, she hanged a long time. i go to mass. what did you say, i am a saint? how can i be a saint hanging without a trial. psst, some of us want to escape into the woods. help us get civilian clothes, sign this petition and join us. you'll lose your job, your place on line, the people's lim-o-zeen won't come for you, you'll have to go back to Tagalog or whatever shithole when they build the wall. no use tacking any moral to this horror, s'called life, bro, cuff em Drano, chop-chop on the throughput. i manage things around here, i talked em into putting more money in, we'll go colour too. so peaceful, mist rising over the lake. maybe i rest here a few minutes, go back to normal, wonder how long i hang here

wakey-wakey eggs and breaky. believe me, i tell you this is a 24/7 money maker, stock up 110 per cent. throw out the dead, clean up the filth. i'd rather kill myself than go through that. what, stocking groceries? they get six dollars value new product. what the hell do i do with all these animals. what we take in today. Kaneko would say blood, bloody hands, bloody dreams, every night i dream i find animals under my bed, they break into my house, stay a while, maybe watch TV, make a sandwich, always leaving something, stain on the sofa, clumps of hair in the sink, and always that stink. i'm going to the Caribbean, pirates, Sir Francis Drake. i'd love to visit. the scirocco has started to blow. so beautiful today. no snow, maybe we can all go to market

tindersticks

I
hang on St Christopher
it's execution day and i'm
no good at conversation

Neptune drowns Mercury
in the 12th House

turns my words to water
drums par ump a pump
pump am i human?

guilty by association
i sold out during the last
spiritual collapse

somewhere in the rubies
is the CEO's sermon

my mission
remix a bottom-dollar
Baltic tanker into 'Trans
Danubian Satan dub
in the key of X

i have two hours

II

how can I revise global
apocalypse while Aegis
falls over the Reich and
voices from the New
Music accuse me of being
another casualty of Glass

another metaphor
pocks the floor
of my sonic bidet

i need an immaculate
injection from Tech
Support in Manilla
so i'm not roadkill
on the zodiacal
wheel

3:15, i need 13 images
from the dark land or
my ass is in the grave
yard

somewhere
brilliant trees shake their
tindersticks over pieces
of Africa

ruined in a day
as usual

think i'll brew some
Desolée, disappear
for a season

III
rush-hour soma
i walk on locusts past
the crack-Mac on the
corner of Third World
and Vine

looking for a sea change
in the ozone eyes of
children injecting 300
years of chemistry

Mars escorts Venus
to the sausage factory
by the docks

i soulmine my cell-
phone, no one home

angry moons hurl
family heirlooms at
redundant stars

dead dance across
tribal acid savannas

ancient pines dream
of Isis. i pause to roast
a jesuit on a spit

saw the head off
a thunder god

emergence

storms goad sea beds
ice caps stride up the hill
orchards flame

valleys swallow borders
coal in revolt, song-n-bone
dancing, beach party pingos,
war-movie ice
floes

crownland, root canals,
hills alive with tiny grinning
jack-hammers

days crumple along
the wrackline, idling seas
waiting for a moon
to show up

vaccines pogo on
autopsy tables, all night
wailing of Quaker State
eighty-weight

i swat the polar
vortex circling the lamp.
the oopsie in the cupboard
goes viral

new media marketers
lick radium from the faces
of old watches

half-finished strangers
float over strip malls. i ask
passing shades if they are
packing heat

umbrellas rise to rumours
of rain posted four years ago,
recycled as Memory by a
weary algorithm

i was never glaciated,
and so i'm full of evasion
techniques

my gut biome
is full of the toasty cremains
of the Magna Carta

i boil the selfies in a solution
strip all the tissues

the last codex oxidizes
i tag the blood vessels, add googly
eyes to the skulls, sell them
on Marketplace

all the city-states
drowned under Europe emerge
with grenades clenched between
their teeth

we have no name
for this

the undreamed world

roads, so loud
since they removed the sea
from the city
air is blue, what people
let slip when they think i am
part of their we
but what is me, what is we,
what is them
the undreamed world
rushes by me, a freshest wildest
o'clock full of deepsea
believers

de-homed II

inventing the world

so your clothes have turned on you
threatening to unravel

and expose the conditions of their production
now is not the time to heed sartorial complaints. this season is about being a
consistent brand, clothes that know their place
furious skies, wildfires, heat domes. when the wind comes creeping around the
parapet, shaking the plastic aspens, this double-curved lifting brush is crisis-proof
use hydrating serums, stand your ground against raging seas, inclement pandemics
be a certified girl-boss. take charge of your life and self-tattoo. why not rise from the
chair before completing the tattoo for a bloody menacing stance?
the red carpet took three million years to unroll. you can't wait that long. apply jojoba
cream, murmura butter mask for the coveted Nova look
always be radiant-cut
remember, you are the bezel-set diamond shining in eternal night

police radios gibber, two counts
kidnapping, one count

tampering with a corpse
an ousted CEO infects both Gnostics and Syriacs with XOFLUZA
feral royal spares drop their bodies without stopping to cover them in lime. people
growing crueller in the ephemeral pool and always that sad business, the ivory, the
slavery
i return and find my hollow over-run with all the humours; choleric, sanguine,
melancholic and phlegmatic. they tell me potential buyers are bidding and I must
vacate so they can flip my wattle-and-daub
time to set up a Patreon account. stars can be refinanced if one is of good yeoman
stock
no one can say whose bones are lying under the infills

i am an influencer, a wellness guru,
a fast fashionista. i harvest

eyeballs and bottle the spirits of the dead
i honed my genealogical skills in a poisoned hedgerow. there was much bloodletting
but i learned how to read the undergrowth
sun doesn't reach beyond the Red Gate. i may be de-homed but i won't give up, go
all gargoyle in the squalid turret
gig economy means self-empowerment. the more i work the more i make
why not a delivery service where i bring handcrafted conspiracies to your doorstep,
all your dark thoughts, fresh, organic, ready to chop, bake and post. COVID-19
hoax, anti-vax, flat-earth, pedophiles, pizza-gaters, Q-drops
craft your own menu, fresh ingredients delivered daily

i ensure vegan, non-GMO theories,
daily updates

from Anubis the Dog Star
install spy ware into your jade egg. upload Babylonian omen texts, cryptic jeremiads,
alien runes to your favourite platform
or, if you have destroyed all your tek and wrapped your home in tin-foil, i will send
texts from Nostradamus, the Book of Revelations, the Illuminati, any text you
choose, by personal courier
the sun dial trembles as light rises and falls. where there is light there is shadow,
where there is sound, echo. who can say where one ends, the other begins
the world springs into existence as i invent it second by second from this darkness

shovel

i came through a rip in the fog, dressed in a cloak of locks
rain too sparse to cool fierce underwood, hiss of steaming trees. i toss a coin into
the wild-wind machine and rent an hour of dead air. summer, huge as a ham-and-
cheese sprawls on an ottoman. i don't know where to put all this light

i sail velvet paintings of the Yukon down arid canyons
gasoline blooms in the shallows just past Random. i order a tall glass of of raw tropic
seas. no matter how many aeolian liars peddle their healing angelica. all the little hills
voted for the bulldozer, they're the ones who begged me to protect the pioneer,
plant the rule of law, clear cut woods into sunlit lots,
water features and garden sans-culottes

Antares bleeds down Twitter alley slick with footpads, coiners,
cat-gut spinners, tripe merchants. my parents have resided a long time under sod
where they have no moon to blame. the eyeless stare at me from jars precisely placed
in a room made of greased beams, smoky tallow. i boil flesh from bone,
don my cross, my rebel ballad, my loop of rope and go out again

nights sharp as a bowie, sap curfewed in trees, a draught lifts the papers
on my desk, fibres quivering under the weight of my writing. i stub my cigar into the
hide of an old-growth elite. i clean and arrange my unstrung lutes. tomorrow i shall
move the armadillo three feet to the right of the skulls. i put away the lantern,
hooks and ladder, roll up the sacks, clean the shovel before i stow it,
i'll be wanting it again



patent pending

conceptual design

a spark leaped from the key
 Teslan resonance
emanations
universal news
 rows of prime
 Menlo Park
incoming
embryonics

condemned William Kemmler
 first humane electrocution
 we sawed the top
off the subject's head, removed
the brain, saw the Deed was done

 patent pending
 [insert
sound commercial
here]

Greek-style cybernetics

lyrical velocity

of shell. George Ellery Hale: a sea

lion should not mean but be

a submarine

enigmatic momentum

hardware embodiment

drums of

numerology

rotor-operated Boolean

slivers of crystal intel

business logic

of the profit-making decision

Bletchley Park

awake under an

Eniac sky

occult mechanism

humans,

both useful servos and mad pulses

caught between mathematics

and flux

endemic symbolics

making them believe

they can grow their own

story arcs

no matter, quantum
computing only a paradigm away
Los Alamos
atomic bombs
black boxes that see under
water, on-
coming night

tiny geometries

Bell Lab loose
in pursuit. run of the mill
women eliminating time
semi-conductors
doped prototypes
oscillating possibilities
all-channel contagion, salesman's panache
volume-whipped by IBM
Moon Walk, no esoteric process
a few ics, trons
izations far from
the safe

consumer entropy

yawful consumption
fathomless maw
prone to boredom
electronic smog, operator error
schmooplots
two-headed babies
in asbestos cases

consumers

problematic at best

sometimes particles

sometimes waves

soft fail whenever an alpha particle

strikes common

silicon

angstrom economies

etiolated

technocracies, Phoenix Arizona

mundane explanations, suntanned

moneymen

unplanned innovation

under the Hoover

Tower

silica chips delivered

in cylinders. EYES ONLY

incantations

step-and-repeat

stars and moons

cost-per-bit mass

integration

individual earth stations

program humanids

binary strings

eight bits long, input-output

one design one

stop chip shop

turn all Ma Bell's children

into comsats

individual earth stations

leased in perpetuity

at lucrative

routes

death of the Presbytery

(LM Montgomery: the Apocypha 1)

spilt milk, unsalted capitals, Masterpieces of Poetry
Ladies of the Table must wait until grace is said
all the pretty, dull girls. swallow blues, mop up
spilt words. cod liver homilies almost
equal to Macauley

shining heights, golden valleys afar, Bride of
Zanoni, pansy-book fancies, Traditions
of the Pantry, Mrs Asquith. bad
taste, al fresco of course

women smoking in public. false jocularly
i rebuked her inability to systematize her work
dour old Scotch maid, impaired morals
“home-cured” pork ham, bromide
must read Les Misérables, will
make myself

Talmage’s Sermons, farmers, farmeresses
big fat sonsy women. feckless gadding
speeders, roadhogs driving lawsuits
the *United Church of Canada*

coal shovel, bowel trouble, vile and taboo
valley of wan dahlias, heirs to the
Austrian Throne doubt the
Presbytery

prolonged doses of history breed pessimism in me
Mrs. Hemans, supernal fleeting ecstasy until
the mail. doleful tale from Ella, *dancing*
spells. willed property, quelled the
salads. my Hepplewhite chairs
incite emulation

chill of *Union* Hall, fireless rooms, gypsophilia
gushing, prayerful women. lurid chromo of
Queen Victoria, dowdy twist of hair
terribly unhygienic. drilled CGIT
girls, dissuaded theological
bogies. gave good
supper

neurasthenic day. cystitis, crossword puzzle infection
no cake but made doughnuts. a phone came
train late, empty cars, no beaux, disfigured
floorboards, something agley here
abscess at the root. truth is
painful. will reread
Youth

rose with the lark. sick headache. Lizzie Borden
guilty. lonely Emily, Charlotte's masochism
heavy sky, dismal *Union* bands unshorn
moorlands, hair-on-end laundry, butt
of petty spite, perpetual dread
of scandal, the Canadian
woodshed

eclipse of sun, disruption of Church. i have been
a good mistress to you, burning autumn. culled
gladiolus bulbs, sugar diabetes, melancholic
phobias. annual family die-out. baptism
by *immersion*; still i said nothing

grey pongee, cream delaine, butterfly sleeves.
bridal night, played *spy*, hewed straight
to the line, tied up the purse strings,
murmured perjury

Honiton lace, side-whiskers, yeast cakes
vitamins. trousseau dress, nauseous
sex stuff hidden under my
old hobble skirt

curse of Hereditary Personality. psycho-analysis,
amour propre, clean as Einstein. shut out
of the parlour, confined to the
writhing room

kept my tryst with thistle, potato stalk, mullein
Unionist and Anti. hybrid *United* Church
painted shades of Calvin and Kaos
symptoms of the *Menopause*?

dear Miss Agnes McPhail: hideously lonely on
the knees of the Gods. nowadays jammed
with *radio*, commissariats of the Bell
Telephone, automatic talking into
black night. Oh for one
real friend

series of events

unsure if we're getting the anti-perspirant protection we need, we start storing our gallon jugs of turpentine on the fire escape. a wrong turn in a snowstorm takes us more than 30 kms out of our way. sky clears but temperature drops to -32. we just found that rich scallop bed and we will not give into the gale bearing down on us. while returning from an out-of-town game we are stopped by an ambulance with flashing lights. they wheel someone out on a stretcher and we lose at least an hour in traffic. a Twin Otter spirals at 175 feet and plunges into a harbour. the DC-9 catches fire, the fuselage tailcone blows off. radar shows false blips, no major airports answer our calls. we know they are ghosting us. the last bus leaves, stranding us in the malarial lowlands where we are bullied by soldiers. a thousand or so refugees are toiling toward us. they show no surprise at finding us at the border. they offer no explanation, show no relief or joy, not one of them smiling. all we can say now is that 4 times a year a widow in Raratonga, a doctor in Ghana, a croupier in Vegas all watch for identical plain-wrapped packets. after 150 hours of observing we receive no evidence of signals. scheduling pressures cause the search to stop at 70 stars. we slip further into darkness

askew

1

tugboats hoot, one low note
umbrellas brawl in the streets. town hall
stands in its square, unsheltered
by skeletal trees

midnight prowls the alleys
over at the Forensic Lab one body lies
in cold storage, the moon
is missing

meanwhile, someone invaded
my flat, replaced my Queen Anne chairs
with replicas from Dollar Depot
and filled a tulip glass with
fleurs-du-mal

they nailed a shelf into the wall
and filled it with glass globes enclosing
tiny models of the Cargill
feed factory

the usual lunatics bark
from TVs, computers, cellphones. up-
stairs, Dolph hammers and saws
all day, all night

2

cars howl down the autoroute,
another funeral cortège lunges from
a side road. peak-season. region
crawling with priests

i return from false hope
to find my walls covered with studio
portraits of people and dogs
i don't know

Dolph is on the balcony
blowing a hunting horn and the moon
has collapsed on the fainting
couch in the parlour

i take my evidence to a police
station, fill in a form, slump in a room
facing the altar displaying photos
of fallen members

a door slams, a microphone
is pushed into my face, i forget what
i wanted to say

limited time only

1

airmiles was back, limited time only. what i planned to do was row through Edmonton but took the Calgary Region Infill Tour. five infills, five renovations. did i stop at the Hermitage? no, Rilke only gave it one star

2

after months of hearing how the change in testing is expected to make it easier for the Fraser Institute to rank rank schools. i collected yelp reviews from gophers then removed the Night Watch from its template

3

alas, the road circled the castle. my offer was not valid with any other coupon. the sale excluded jewelry, items tagged as housewares or furniture. i recall underlining that sentence in *The Pensées* when i was in college

4

water rose to the tops of my sandal straps
at dusk i emerged from the cul-de-sac, tagged the body
informed the family. not even photo-radar could stop
me from releasing the Sophists

5

every day i lunched with Voltaire at the Calgary Tower
only needing a five per cent deposit until i took possession
of course, making all necessary revisions. why did i imply
at the interview that Babel designed the Tower?

6

yesterday's sunset was a Van Gogh which tried to block roads
and attack vehicles. the Potato-Eaters did not deter me from
revving a generator in the Glenbow Museum

7

all i know about Wuthering Heights is that women were always
looking out windows and swooning. Odysseus was an alias for
Ulysses. King and Messiah were the trending baby names but
one could only get financing on Matrix and Corolla

8

in my first American visit since Vegas, i purchased New
Balance Toning Shoes. my rights may be impacted by a class
action settlement. if i wish to opt out i must complete and
submit the Opt-Out form

9

i can't remember why i tried to carry that nine-foot blog up
the stairway in the Glenbow Museum. then there was the time
i fell asleep in a Vermeer. the Famous Five were never so dire

10

since then i've been plying my Dollar Menu to boost
sales. it is known Van Gogh sold only one painting
in his lifetime. even Rembrandt went belly-up
despite his bejewelled selfies

11

what colour were my red roses? even though i explore
all possibilities, empower my life choices, enjoy every
minute of time spent with respected business mentors
i have never owned a painting by George Bush
the Younger

12

i host the best parties. everyone from Zeno to Bentham
has paraded through my mcmansion exposing their
theories especially Heidegger who never leaves
how weary i have grown of Dasein

13

held a season-ending availability after the Flames
were swept away by rosy-fingered dawn. I xeroxed
an email to John Ruskin. on my honour, Ruskin
once told his butler to address visiting sunsets
by their formal titles

14

having completely forgotten the laundry i printed
a working 38-calibre handgun. trying to explain
the difference between an illusion of anxiety
and anxiety itself is like comparing printed
and mechanical handguns

imminent

light burns on the other side of the kitchen door
far end of the hall, gibbous moon, one window, my own,
is lit. i ring the bell, ring again
a shadow appears

no one enters the street beyond the window facing
the courtyard. tall clock in a walnut case swings a copper
disk back and forth. in the workshop, wooden
heads sit on shelves

twilit silhouettes fill the streets
tugboats whistle at the lock. sky on graveyard shift
an open window, someone looking at me,
it may be best to leave

at the station men pour
from the train carrying geraniums under their arms,
brass bands oompah toward the sea shivering
at the end of town. masked figures
jostle me

over the bridge, so many people,
outliers coming off the trains passing nowhere
to everywhere, men climbing to rooftops
all silvery in rain

footsteps on the stairs, light
under the door. an armchair falls out the window,
crashes to the pavement. this is followed
by a grandfather clock

too late to carry the body
down to the coal cellar. i tell myself, stay calm, play
the game to the end. its humid again, moon
trying to shine through her
blindfold

old story

today is in hiding but leaves still prevent the fence
from molesting me, charcoal and tallow rolling down moldy walls
of early October, the park benches rise and greet each other
in the village square, yes i see they saw me
up to now i've eluded them

water rogers the doors, fills vestibules, cellars
villagers cover their faces, refugees pole their cardboard children
across the flagstone as sky spits syllabub and hints it might
put the bright out

but i can still hear rooftops singing beneath the earth, the fine
bel canto of national guards, the thump of cronut
magnates dowelling secondary lagoons
into nomadic dawns

soldiers crawl out of black tents driven into
the ground with wooden teeth. villagers emerge to shuffle
the benches and open the trenches facing
the chimneys

old story, the head is tossed into the river so i sell
my horse to gain enough coin to rent a boat. days yawp from
side lakes. i farce through marshes, every now and then
brewing some sort of wort until i am caught
by a covert bench

cinders twirl before they fall into the cracks

partition I

between matter and stars

shaping the future

i am Lieutenant Colonel Malraux, André, military chief of this region

how jolly! the midnight picnics must have been great fun

i was president of the World Committee Against Fascism

my history is very shaky. the kings of England have always muddled me

General de Gaulle asks you in the name of France if you will marry me

you don't understand i'm not the sort of woman important men marry

ever since the 18th Century women have played an important part in France

our wedding won't be held in a church?

we are in a cosmic realm older than religion

not in white with bridesmaids and bells and choirboys

flung at random between matter and stars

of course it doesn't matter to me

what a long drive, it reminds me of the path in the forest in a Grimm's fairytale

but what of the antithesis between nature and culture?

it's longer than one expects, the trees are so dark and close

in order to shape the future Gandhi appealed to very ancient feelings

where the prince gets lost you know

the revolutionary impulse

tell me, tell me, was the first Madame Malraux beautiful?

there was some rowdyism and an enthusiastic Marseillaise at the end

now if you will excuse me i must give the kitchen a few orders

no, please don't, you don't have to do that, i'm sure i approve the menus

if you're looking for a way to keep Indochina i have nothing to suggest

because we won't keep it

no it's not that, i only felt rather cool in the library and thought i'd just light the fire

i didn't become De Gaulle's first minister to preside over the liquidation
of the British Empire

i just opened the library door, i didn't go in

why go to Guiana since the prefect says it's lost?

i'm sorry, i didn't mean to disturb anything

it was all dark, covered in dust sheets

do you think that Mirabeau would have saved the monarchy?

oh André, how should I know, i'm not a thought reader

i know people are looking me up and down saying, what on earth does André see in her

we no longer represent anything but shadows

why do you say that, why do you look like that

even if you disregard Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, which should not be done,
communism still comes closest to the revolutionary impulse

i'll never be careless enough to do that again

glass nost

ONE MORNING AT DICK AND PAT'S HOUSE. how odd, all our glasses have vanished. every drinking glass in the house is gone. NO GLASSES. i don't think it was suicide, Dick, it was MURDER. but how can we prove that, Pat? Wheat Chex, Rice Chex, Corn Chex. nothing easier to infiltrate than PARTY MIX, eh Dick? living in the SUBURBS was great camouflage for Dick's ESPIONAGE activities. Dick wasn't happy, but then, he'd never been a happy man and probably wouldn't be until the COMMUNISTS seized power. i guess those empty cabinets got to me. every time Dick held a CELL MEETING in the rec room another glass would disappear, the plates and bowls looked so lonely. i had to drink my mimosas from a TIN CUP. i ended up with IRRITABLE BLADDER, it's a real syndrome. i should have killed Dick. oh, he was basically decent, a good provider. it's just ... it's really a tragedy. someone should have confiscated his LIBRARY CARD years ago

Book of the New Sands

origins

i was born on the island
a synergistic blend of coral and microplastics
far from the mass-market
world

masterful, my ability
to calm the oxen, i also created oil painting
reproductions for tourists inspired by
my memories of plants and
animals.

until Peak Oil hit Earth
with the force of a nuclear bomb dooming
me to leave my island for the great
unknown

Western Europe

my role as young specialist
was to stabilize oil forecasts. the North Sea,
one of many monotonies encountered
on my journey through economic
collapse.

at first gladdened by the sight
of heavy steamer traffic, my mood clouded
as i neared the EU

nothing but governments full
of austerity programs, world leaders
hoarding Omega 3 supplements

Russia and the Middle East

Lake Baikal, oil-slick and
tranquil, but i was not lulled. when
the sea is calm anyone can take
the helm

it takes a master to sort assets
from equities and force loose sands into
state-run mines

rendezvoused with Putin.
no such thing as Oil Shortage, he crooned.
his calm manner soothed me. i saw he
was the stabilizing presence
in the region

stalled in hot sand,
waiting to be processed by the UN,
i became convinced non-evident force
was the only way to stabilize
Iraq

smart vehicles delivered
radio-controlled prophecy under force
of US arms. i saw God's hand burning
in the sands of Saudi
Arabia.

Africa

millions of people live below
the International Monetary Fund,
entire cities made of abandoned tankers.
i had to contend with cloudy
and calm days

in response to the Vegetable Oil
spill in Port Harcourt, i trained children
to kill during panic-selling

important to calm Somalia,
i reintroduced gold to bolster the flow
of sand feeding the giant oil

we respect their spirituality.
offshore platforms lead to mystic realms.
calming pipelines contain lithium
to balm throat and heart
chakras

Gulf Coast

sands melt into vanilla
glycerin, all beauty and utility. oils
diffuse through the water. on a calm day
you can see twenty or more
seeps

after leaving the spa
i was tossed into RealClimate.com.
tidal action had worked the sand
into a fury making BP
divert

even a lazy hurricane palls
everyone's weekend. oil is forced deeper
into sediments causing quicklime
in realtime

according to nakedcapitalism.com
America will retaliate with force. we need
a massive paramilitary force to calm
the growing number of
pelicans

world without oil

the Tusker Battalion swung
east. we sandbagged monsoon-drunk
refugees. some of the Bradleys leaked oil.
we tried to calm them but biofuels
offer no solution

i used the skills i honed
on my island, diffused tensions
with Crystals D to G. composed of silicon
dioxide, percocets stabilize
the aura

intergalactic missiles hold
a clear resonance where one may feel
oneness with the latent powers
of the higher world

the Arab Spring

a social media history

on the front lines

the girls called, someone is shooting
strange seeing something so intimate
people posed as customers

seven rounds fired, one hitting the house
they're just upset, right? we're a decent family
i don't wear jewelry, i don't understand
those who do

the entire thing is gorgeous, friendly staff
i had never been to Libya though i was raised
in Kelowna. quaint shops, pubs
great family operation

violence increases

on Sunday everyone decided making
a snowman was serious business. my partner
keeps the receipts just in case

so the other day Violet went, oh Mom
we have to talk. i sprayed a whole can
of Bear-B-Gone on my face then cleared
the creek in one leap

the plane was on a mission for Qaddafi
so uplifting, bad guys in a movie, such
a sweet relationship, best costumes ever

western support for Arab Spring rebels

i'll be blogging with them for six months
no one realizes how hard it is to write
a book when you're tweeting and skypeing
with rebels

our mandate is to dress them in bright
colours, give them a big personality
ingredients are listed in order of serving
size. Dr Oz says we can add a side salad

we worry about those who don't know
Keto. supplements are part of the move up
to semi-estate lots, multi-level marketing
creates an inviting home

political analysis

though this seems to be a psychological
thriller with horror overtones, deep down
it's a love story sponsored by Amway

all the characters have a real inner life
it would be interesting to stage the rebellion
with trampolines

it's like a Voice audition. every rebellion
is different; content that may be fine for some
is disturbing to others. apart from the awful
noise, bruxism is not a problem

i'm proposing some common sense reforms
so folks can run for office. people, it's all about
consequences. i don't know if we can handle
a healthier population

you can't pursue human rights complaints
just because your feelings are hurt

Introvert Control Summit

identifying i-verts

yes, introverts can seem harmless as salt
on the rim of your margarita glass

no doubt, i-verts use far less fuel at idle
than spark-plug extraverts. their heated
hand grips are logically placed

a closer look will expose the chitin
lithium packs, kabuki masks covering
a hollow wow factor

inside a joyless world

introversion is a disfavoured personality
trait for good reason

their timid amygdalae prevent them from
abilifying at the same rate as extraverts

prone to bipolar disorder, mania, criminal
sleepwalking. i-verts perform poorly on
Myers Briggs astrological charts

on the front with E-vert forces

of course, preventing the birth of children
with introversion is the humane solution
but we lack proper funding

we're trying to fight genetics with plug-ins
Zoloft, Prozac, kyolic garlic, original Swiss
formulae can only do so much

we can't keep up with the Clorox, sippy cups
rubber ducks needed (all requiring Green
certification)

our Sleep Age wheels, Zeo Displays
master psychics all date back to the Cold War
introverts see us coming, scut our missiles

we need Patreon support to continue
facial-solve programs, translate i-vert tics
to believable human emotion

treatment of i-verts at Gitmo

over-the-horizon radar detects advancing
i-verts, bounces signals off the ionosphere
there should *be* no casualties

leech detox falls well within parameters
of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual
of Mental Disorders

menga comics, X-box and happy lamps
do *not* contravene the Geneva Convention
every Friday the i-verts receive gel shots

questions? call our ethics hotline

can Everyday Creativity™ reform i-verts?

some forms of introversion are temporary
event-driven. neuro-transmitters malfunction
due to hormone imbalance, dementia
menopause

every day we use language, speak what
has been spoken, an ability so ingrained
we forget how creative it is

i believe even those of limited intelligence
such as introverts, can be taught to express
thoughts we have always expressed

share a selfie or meme to which anyone
can respond!

self-help for i-verts

change your Style-Point. be positive-oriented
play-act new behaviours in an extraverted
world

self-expression improves your immune
system

perform as if every day is big hoop drama
hair cuts, wacky recipes, scrapbooking
all lie within your range

don't forget to update your diagnostic
bracelet

pays-bas

sleety little street full of tolling bells
children hidden in topiary shapes, rooms lit
by tulip bulbs

*

warm perfume of simmering herbs
evening crawls across the floor. damn, i only
paid for one torch, i hit my head on a storm
lost alphabets seep from the walls

*

trees snigger behind their leaves. they steal
the shirt off my back to bind
their wounds

*

clang of an anvil shakes the sun
awake. stalls of glass-eyed cabbage, hanging
baskets of eels. coal cellar, a man, always
a man lurking in the dark

*

i have learned to side-eye
in the city, a ready smile and swerve
when the odds turn against me. a shape,
some one where no one should be,
a glimpse hurtling my way

*

furor of infowars, roar of subreddit
cancelled statues poach game from
supermarkets. another nest of homeless
people crushed by giant art hurled
from C-suite windows

*

armed guards use the moon
to break down doors marked with chalk
crosses. i leave once the head is severed
and thank the executioner
for his service

*

hours come at me from all directions
i have cancelled all relations with clocks.
unstrung from the calendar, tilling days
all the same, infomercials murmuring
into the wee smalls

*

night clutches my ankles. dreams
peck me with their great beak-masks
and take me down, down some more
people still out walking their dead
or soon-to-be

crypto

summer packs all its wallop in a bindle, hops
a train. snow waits for the day-labour truck then drops
into a box, everywhere skies walking
into windows

i polish the tarnished horizon clasping my ankles
and pass the fascists breeding in potholes. clash of side
streets. cops stroll on patrol in pillowed sheets
axe handles swinging

dusk creeps along the banks of ancient
jests and tiltyard escapades. midnight flashes my family
of paving stones. moon, mean as a clipped coin
oversees the falling children

clouds sloop into mucilage pools. i claw out
the riptide of family photos, score a dime bag of air miles,
reap today's gibbering from the monocle
glued to my pineal gland

unmatched femurs jam laundry chutes, pallets
of tinned narratives are loaded on wagons, rolling into
float camps moored at the mouth
of disappearance

the who-cares arrive salting carelessness
down QAnon Sound. serpents rustling under my feet.
8chan aliases peer through blockchain
visas

self-reproach drifting in from the river, every
no one lurking in verges. i have just enough crypto-
night to buy balaclavas for all the pixels
hiding in barrows

an ampersand walks through a phrase, attacks
the A-frames. the driverless Model T picks up a crate
of roll-your-owns. lawyers stand on the shoulders
of assault rifles

what tumbles out next, a rootball of untold
tales, implications camped along empirical shores sent
to you alone, Private and Confidential
under separate cover

i can hear the Late carrying their ropes, baskets
and spades. i am not myself, i never had a self in that
real where White Beard holds the sickle and
ghosts flee the ovens



dominion

glass has been falling
all afternoon, thirsty trees
fleeing to the suburbs

Sunday driving trying
to decipher the ominous
rolling over the country

long ago backhoes
snorted up the carcass
of my past while Stephen
Harper keeps sneaking
through the dark side
of the mirror

the wilderness draws her
skirts close, flips junk fungi
lichened Nestle-fresh

still the drowned ships
refuse to speak

and any no one can
moon their own madness
over a heartland

their faces, safe as rural
towns, rode into highnoon
flaking gold racism over
the trial of Louis Riel

we were taught
light came to the Dark
Continent with white
power

we had no pet names
for the language of myopic
vision, no room for
sentiment

in false history cooked
in the creosote of the
CPR

the dispossessed

light cracks the ceiling
i wake, try to send
morning back
no luck

sun flees my valise
the soap factory pretties
the water, safety boots
scuff through soot

button-down shoes
two sizes too big and already
hungry, cruising in black
limousines

abandoned mansions
stand entranced as the man
behind the easel nails
my childhood to
the floor

my father used to stack
the pallets, now he collects
broken noses for sale
or rent

a foehn wind detains a can
of turpentine on the run
dead heat beats a retreat
to Parliament Hill

armed trees allow no one
to wallow through the gallows
of a sullen rain falling under
walmart law

rain is an ancient sign
says the bag lady growing out
the east side of city hall
people need to hear their sky
speaking in tongues

snow fills the boulevard
cars vanished long ago into
St Peter's great white
show room

tanks are what we need now
beautiful tanks, whoever
will eat must work or fill
the asylums

twilight draws close
my naked past falls from the sky,
i can't lift the weight
of night

unboreality

in this country waning suns
knock on doors, butt-dial other stars. softwood
lumber prowls the streets, sawdust pollen
falling all piney to bottom
dollar

chiliastic milk idling
in moose-proof coolers. flumes of mercury
rusted tusk of a stately plow. sport
hunting trophies starve
on camera

national dreams roll by
on flatbeds disguised as boreal forest. nuns
crochet their eugenics as cops
prep another starlight
ride

i pack a century for lunch, plot
a genocide, capture a flag made of captured
flags. Must wipe off the fatty bits
of Cree stick to the
crucifix

at the zed market park
six barristers toss bread at me, call me lawless,
a gnostic who peddles faces no one
should be using as
a face

hours slop into ancient
hate, cached spite on the axis of gravlax
smell of oversight, smiley
pills having a nice
yesterday

i clear ice down to
the marzipan. along the suture route,
a lien of Chinese, a scoop
of Indians, a can of
Sardinians

parables lie fallow in
data crumble. i raise a glass of snowflakes
to all the Ford Erinyes undoing
who we are, how it
happens

credit ratings open
the pituitary door. a cinereous truck drives
across my shoulders, sippy cups
wild in a madding
wind

tar clings to the
sprockets of Ex Libris stickers. Chopin
steals the piano. a hare leaps from
a tapestry. PostMedia is
disgusted

corn gods hoard creamed
ammo, waterboard loam into coal profit
freezing skeet-shot children
eaten by worst-case
senescence

online media primp their
toupees and combovers as security
guards lead me to the gulag
of thoughts and
prayers

runaway narrator

once i was Scheherazade
trapped in a Family Novel
a narrative fixed in amber
domesticity

until i fell in love with
the Information

oh, the beauty of data

the abs of mapware
the cynical glint of
analytics

my search terms
rolled west

past the Rockies
all rumpled extensions
liminal terminals

3 million base-pairs
slewed into bouquets
of protocol

valleys of plasma
burned in noon sun

i was awed by oxblood
diagnostics growing high
as rain

the sea, typically focused
on publishing new organisms
diversified into storage
management

satellites tolled, i rubbed
my bloodshot cathodes
a breakfast sandwich
applauded

active verbs skipped
mandatory fields

family histories scuttled
into drainpipes

i crept into Prince Rupert
unable to remember how
to land an epiphany

the Night Manager
wanted his dream back
but i hadn't finished mining
its attributes

cul-de-sac

mirror warrior, you offer
a bouquet of wounds. park
your scars underground. no
one has to know how much
you lost in the last depression
 gorgeous questions lie
 in cages. blood drips out
 a news-mouth. botoxed
 exits lead to ring-roads
 paved with chokers. Mr
and Mrs Cuckoo Clock hawk
your eyes for one-way Grecian
urns. sunset fakes an ID, drives
through the walls of your flesh
into satin-lined amnesia

partition II

impossible things

conjuring tricks

i called on the bishop, he wasn't home, but his lady was there

they used to teach missionaries conjuring tricks to combat the witch doctors

she told me everyone around here is talking about us, you and me

i've met the witches swathed in their mummy clothes, their peasant mugs

and madhouse shrieks

we never even had a proper wedding all those dullards of village headmen, look

at their intrigues in the Congo

no white dress, orange blossoms, bridesmaids

stirring up trouble everywhere

a life is ordered by values, our own but also those of nations and perhaps those

of humanity *i'm sorry darling, i broke the china cupid when i was in the morning room today*

let us not forget that culture is first and foremost a vast resurrection

why were all the most valuable things put in the morning room

if art is to play its part the question must be unanswerable

why do you say these things to me

i did not know to what extent Nehru was artistically minded

i meant to tell you before but

Stalin once said to me, in art i only like Shakespeare and the dance

dirndl

i'm afraid the cottage is going to rack and ruin, it's all so unpleasant
the Passion can't have been very pleasant for Christ's family
i was only wondering if there was anything one could do
there were tanks, beady-eyed little dictators in the throes of paranoia
to keep the cottage from being spoilt by damp

one day I shall have grey hair and lines and things
in the 17th century old age was preparation for eternal life
what do you mean, André?
when Pizarro left for Peru he was fifty-three years old
i wish you would not treat me like a child
we don't settle the problem of independent tribes with curlers or dirndl

Chiang Kai-Shek

i never had a chance to clear the air between us
our Vietnamese friends are afraid your words mean permanent partition
i'm sorry, so terribly sorry, i ought to have known it's all my fault
surely our experience with Chiang Kai-Shek taught us to never breach the magnificent chausable
of western diplomacy
i've grown up André, this evening
Nebru felt that colonialism dies only when
i'll never be a child again
the victory of a western expedition ceases to be

can't we start over

a foregone conclusion

i won't ask impossible things

Lenin once said that joint action was perfectly conceivable

i'll be your companion

provided the slogans and flags were kept separate

i don't want you to love me

i don't want you

cut

little rainy trees listen to the doctor insist but i can't
even body or spirit, only silhouette through the sleet
leaping from Champlain's nose

without the least ado a red squirrel scoops my last
ego. are we done, then? never liked thinking this side
of the heart

feeling ludicrous in my new unfeasible, i climb
the third floor friends i never had and hailstorm
kindred lost in my fluff-busting filter

we should be rolling up the ruelles following
Cohen in a lovely melancholy just east of darker.
alas, i always post the wrong country

another moon with a man on it roaring nothing
true. fate will need binoculars to find me hanging
in the Oratory cut by bits of morning

uncharted

another day of canned monkey hoots, fake peacock screams
and rogue fireworks. hard to tell what my neighbours are up to
but obeying the law can't be on their list

the day has ended, i forgot to rue it

lights and sirens and blockades oh my. cops milling around,
pointing and walkie-talking

it's getting to me, fires, evacuations, the sight of
graduates picking freshly rolled diplomas from the rubble of
their public schools

a woman hangs herself from a tree in the cemetery after
learning

her foetus was a gun

i decide to hang myself in my backyard. every day i get
up, make my bed, do some kind of chore, this is what i'm
going to do on Saturday

the cemetery has issued a press release. they're doing
fine, summoning the backhoes to remove all the murderous
trees

they ask for privacy during this difficult time

i have to step over a woman's body crumpled on the floor of
the diner

we talk among ourselves, what is going on, everything
is changing, this kind of thing never used to happen here

the server tops me up but i refuse the eggs-over-easy, i
won't give them the satisfaction

sky is everywhere these days but although i've been walking
under it my entire life, i don't know anything about it

maybe there is a cloud that looks like Jesus Christ or
Donald Trump. i never see that kind of cloud and choose to
avoid those who do

the women, usually sunning themselves on a log in the pond,
are missing. the shooting starts when i reach the bridge. i guess
this has been going on a while

i don't know why, humans are inscrutable

Saturday is here and so is its to-do list. i rise early to practice
hanging myself so i do a good job later. the process isn't as
easy as it seems on crime shows

the noose is heavy and rough, itchy around my neck,
skin rashing up

i rehearse so long the day ends. tomorrow's to-do
doesn't involve hanging myself

police found a body on the boat. they say it's too soon to tell if
it was murder, or if she strangled herself

all they know is the "accident" happened somewhere
between Roe and Wade

noonish, the power snaps off. when, if, it returns i
promise to catch up on birthday greetings

i know i need to do better next time. though i mean
well i'm always too late, my messages appear like strange grey
islands on an ancient map

rising

sun steeping
the quiltlands. i break
cover

river evades
the trees lopped along
the slope

early feral yellow
willow grovelling, fire
of fall

eye slips
undipped into i was
i used to be

**

room close
as a tomb, no one comes
stumbling

over my crumbled
lyrics, poor Yorick, alas
my face

young once
slithers into corners
where leaves

shrivel before
they fall and fall still
green

**

what can i
want from the wind
letting never in

bitters lie
belly-up in this climate
of petty spite

tomorrow i'll
crawl into the nearest
aporia

moon the sundial
dive into the shallow
deep

**

first dark thought
crawls out, smokes my
wit out

still, people live
on the river. eight came
on horseback

weep day
i sniff Persepolis in
the vestry

hissing pit of
clerics possibly even
closer

**

mud, weed
murdering cant stud
the chipped

selfie. Joshua
hung five kings from
five trees

cut the forest
ruin the gallows trade
no one

is listening
i'm the only ghost in
the room

the fartoom

nous

for days were nights
in the fartoom
anyness

sotoolonly in onesomeness
i invent heaven with animated gifs
become a being becoming again

emojis streak through the buzzfeed
the scrawl on my facewall rollicks
slo-code into wetted life

all atrot in windy Nous
i raise claymation quake up
half-past Quik in the ayem

adhominids

look at us crossing
your touchscreen, dirt-side
refuseniks, ruck of hackneyed
ad-hominems

Bauhaus cosplayers full of trollery
in architectural dollaramas

airmiled to the teeth we smile
feeling agog the round of us agrog
in Google, putting truth untruth
together

survey

you know i'm a busy organism
crudely designed solipsystem

midden of muddy old delta
forked hundreds of tines
run in parallel

ramped up temporal lobe
single-channel base-band
god-mod add-on

sysops mock uppity noobs
singing alibis from their
six-penny stiles

help me improve my ad
experience, shape my species
make us the best instance
currently running

slangwanging

at Starbucks i dunk my
little syntalks in subjunctions
hot enough to stunt the sun

script under corruption
hitme versers keyclicking
facsimiles to the farscape

oldcant data cheaping down
morbidly drab hobby lobbies

and lo stole o'er forests
limrick'd by wifi machines
the unnamable blautüth

first-person poetry built
from the dust of robot brain
surgery, crash national
low-wage

rhetoric, common
pandemic, squabbles entered
as second-class matter
open letters in bottles

L

a hauntography

unknown where she came from, where she went. we don't even know what she looked like the very concept of L is a representation spliced from old media echoes, a flake of undated newsprint, the slant cries of seers, fools, no-tell winds

L, likely in her 17th or 18th year, would have been expected, many references suggest, an early biographer also concludes. a bit of gossip deepens the plot, what McFly allegedly said may well be, everybody agrees, everyone says so. when did every body become every one?

her first arrival from the pines, all too likely the day after her triumphant, let us assume, appearance at the graveyard, which raises. it is wrong to suppose, there is no evidence of her presence. was L a historical person, or derived from the even more forgotten?

hearsay places her on the road late-summerish. L may have been surprised by the narrow streets, the anonymity, the bitter din of opinion. all this fuelled her art, an accepted but dubious homily for there is something else, a frisson, something not meant to be seen

we can log a plausible chronology of this early period, so let's not ponder the lost harmonics of Greek music but wonder if the figure seated apart from the group circled around the orchestra could be L?

comedy, tragedy, the unsettled cached in the interval. was L's role ever recorded? in one version she was prologue, the next, an epilogue chockful of quackery. motive must be inferred, no one seems to have known her real

also widely reported and believed. we may call up the document, gaze with wild surmise, yes, slip through gaslit trails of bloody thievery leading to the Shroud of Turin

she may have. it is estimated half the urban population of the world did. one can then imagine a restless figure inhaling one vision, exhaling another. L's star may have led her far from home, perhaps to *the bottomlands*, but this is moving too far ahead

could the record contradict the evidence that she was indeed? the real of L's voice escapes us, archaic recordings of the day only echo her wild-mingling resonances falling to dark in the back alleys of kumbayas. was the Oxford comma intended?

possible, of course. scholars toss seven-elevens over old jubilation grounds. this is not to tie the unquiet together. lying outside her time we merely sense the sound-pictures soon to become

there is every reason to believe the shadow of L has passed, but as we know, she vanished into her twilight

we have witnesses, L stealing wind from beyond, wind of endless making. for a moment we rest, sure we have found her, but is it Homer, is it the gathering late, the confused Decameron from which she emerged? we may never know, winds don't come when called

Plotinus spoke of being alone in the Alone that alone it may Alone. when did L divine within herself that fateful drift, that change in the deep blue sea

moon looking down

beyond
the tidal reaches
one of those

holloways
so long ago i can't
no one can

my eye plays false
all ways pursued by
never-was

men topple off
themselves into
sudden

birth rights
roar from street
fires

sunset a little
cryptic, a little bit
mad

falling on what
fears what curious
small

dead fall
grey and chilly city
lost the song

hills once tolled
over the fells, rolling
dunes

upland rift
deep unseen spin
drift far ago

the bleak
revealed no more
than the sad

required
i thought you were
dead, she said

ghostline

not quite light
when you glanced back
saw here turn
there

so young you
sent to midnight running
where you would
never know

places no one
lives they will not shade
you they will not
friend you

crossing half-
meanings unseen straight
into the coming
next

so many
forgettings this isn't wasn't
can't be get used
to it

what you are
now Gone Away isn't sleep
you wake some
where

